262 All food was also made up of the 4 elements. Here rice was of
826 particular importance. The body was seen as built and maintained by rice. Flesh in fact was rice, an image probably derived from Buddhist scriptures. 11

• 82 Each element carried with it its substantive aspect of heat, flowing, etc., and its astrological nature and relations. Elements could be compatible or incompatible with each other. Earth, water, wind, iron, and wood for instance were compatible. Gold "got along" with all elements. Fire, though, was incompatible with wind, water, and wood for it could destroy their proper proportion.

828 The effect of astral and planetary relationships at the
787 moment of birth on one's constituent elements induced qualities of character.12 Mind and body were a continuum. Because family members were born at different moments of time, intrafamilial temperamental differences were expected.13 Persons made up of incompatible elements quarreled. Thus, friction might occur between parents and children. For a husband and wife, who lived in especially close proximity, the constitutional elements were of special importance. Through marital relationships their elements were in physical contact. Consequently, in the old days, a couple comtemplating marriage ascertained through their horoscopes the compatibility of their natal elements to determine whether they could live together without destroying each other. For instance, a girl with much fire in her make-up was easily angered and prone to fevers. She could not make a successful marriage with a boy with much wood.

Physiology

753 A single physiological process controlled the functioning
826 of the body and the mind; i.e., the equilibrium of its elements.
[827] If the elements were in proper balance, proportion or harmony, a person was healthy; if an element were excessive or deficient,

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11. "This, my formed body, is composed of the 4 Elements, generated by Father and Mother, built up from rice, porridge and sour gruel," says the Buddha (Suriyabongse 1951:11).

12. Merit, the other determinant of character, is discussed in "Influences on Health" below.

[539] 13. Cf. the proverb "The joints (knots) on the same stem are nevertheless unequally spaced, so even brothers are of different minds," (Gerini 1904:14).

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775 Moreover, her life would some day begin again. Whether birth
844 was rapid or slow, the experience of the suffering deepened her sense of compassion and, as will be shown, brought her closer to fulfillment of her life role.[41]

Habit

153 If mutual help organized relationships, habit (khoei)
•82 stabilized them. Khoei means "to be used to, accustomed to,
853 habituated." A first occurrence was an example and set the pattern for all subsequent occurrences. With one performance
[761] one was accustomed to an action. For instance, shortly after the temple was built 2 people died, deaths in Bang Chan "always occurred in pairs;" it was the temple's "habit." Moverover, "the head priest could never expel a priest because he had never done so." Again, a few women saw to it that during this period their babies were given a few grains of rice (even though they were far too young to be offered new rice regularly), so that "later on, if they got sick, they could always at least eat rice," for "they would be used
[171] to it." "Glutinous rice was not good for babies in Bang Chan, but in North Thailand [where it was a staple] it could be eaten because people were used to it." Someone had set the example which started the custom.

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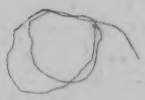
844 41. Bang Chan's Buddhist phrasing of the meaning of pain and
154 death in childbirth seems to indicate that childbirth occurred
171 under psycho-cultural conditions that induced relaxation and
114 reduced fear and pain. An "easy" delivery lasted 2 hours. According to a modern medical theory, (Dick-Read: Childbirth Without Fear, passim) lack of fear of childbirth leads to mental and physical relaxation which in turn reduces pain and labor. Dr. Dan Bradley observed that labor was shorter among Siamese women than among non-Siamese. "Facts seem to prove that parturition is both shorter and easier to Siamese mothers than is usual to Europeans and Americans" (Bradley, 1865:79). We accept his first-hand observation because he had 40 or more years of experience in delivering babies, both Thai and non-Thai (missionary wives, etc.), and suggest that it may be taken as proof of mental and physical relaxation derived from lack of fear. Although the missionary women may have been frightened because they were in a far country, Dick-Read argues that fear of childbirth has long been present among American women and this fear has the effect of longer, harder labor.



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A major clustering of first experiences, and so of habit formation, was in intra-uterine existence. Every experience of the mother was shared by the fetus. After birth, a baby daily formed habits of eating, sleeping, and crying, and later, as a child, habits of respect, obedience, truth-telling, etc. To create good habits efforts were bent to control and ameliorate any first experience: to make it as correct as possible; to seek out favorable astrological moments; to ask auspicious, skilled, or learned persons to be part of the initial action. An example was the establishment of nursing. When the baby was put to the breast the first time, the objective was not nourishment but to establish a good habit, viz. copious and strong sucking from an ample milk supply. Only after this first nursing did breast-milk as nourishment become important. If on this occasion he did not nurse well, he would have the habit of eating poorly all his life. Moreover, whatever the mother's experience with her first-born, it would not only be repeated every time he nursed, but set the nursing pattern for all subsequent children she bore. For her first-born, though, a mother would have had no previous experience of making milk. She had to be taught, or shown, how to make good milk, just as the baby had to be taught to suck, and later taught to eat rice. Consequently, the first-born baby was almost always first nursed by another person (not necessarily a kinswoman) with copious milk. Then 2 or 3 days later, because the example had been set, good milk came in and the mother started nursing. What was to be avoided at all costs was a first suck of colostrum, which appeared to be "unfit, early milk" from an insufficiently lactating breast. This would be a poor precedent. Until a mother decided her milk was right for nursing, a baby subsisted usually on honey and water, and maybe a little crushed banana. If a woman were not satisfied with her nursing capacities for her first-born child, when the second child was born she might ask another lactating woman to give the baby a first nursing so as to improve her own habit.[47] One woman flatly said her own milk was always unfit as proved by her babies' health, so she used a bottle of (canned) cow's milk from the start. She felt she had the habit

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47. Bradley (79:80) felt that the dehydration attendant on lying by the hot fire significantly reduced the quantity and quality of the milk.

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